

oriented aid and mentoring programs. Other participants spoke on welfare reform, job discrimination, educational development programs, and family involvement in education. Another participant asked about the processing time for SBA loans.]

The President. No, we have given instructions to Pat Saiki, who is here, to speed this process up. Now, I hope we're success-

ful. We will keep on it to see that we are. You might ask her just on this one specific—right behind you—because that is the underlying as to what we're trying to do here, and it is very, very important in the reconstruction.

Note: The discussion began at 9:30 a.m. at Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church.

Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion With Leaders of the Korean Community in Los Angeles

May 7, 1992

The President. Are you going to say something, or do you want me to go ahead? Let me just say thank you to the community leaders assembled here. And let me single out Mr. Lee for his hospitality not just to us today, to Secretary Sullivan, the Governor, Senator Seymour, Secretary Kemp, Pat Saiki of SBA, but to so many.

This place has become not just a command center in times of turmoil, turmoil that every American regrets. This President, I'll tell you, my heart aches for those who have lost their jobs. But this community is strong. I wish all you guys would walk with me—maybe you've been there and seen the volunteers in the next building. It's unbelievable, 200 out there this very day, 200 to be trained; 180 of the 200, I'm told, are CPA's willing to pitch in to help do what's necessary to reconstruct.

I look at this in a very broad sense, not only in terms of families that were hurt but in terms of international. I think most people here will concede and rejoice in the fact that we have good relations with Korea, something I take great pride in, incidentally.

I think people in Korea share the same hurt that all of us do when they look and see this community of enterprising individuals that David reminds us came here, what, some 25 years ago, some more recently; got in, grabbed a piece of the American dream, and built something. To see it shattered is not the American way. And I will do everything I can to show our friends abroad as well as here that it's not the American way.

And with that in mind, it means I want to help. It means the Federal Government is prepared to help in every way we possibly can.

I want to go back to the volunteer concept that I mentioned a minute ago. That is also part of the American way. I'm sure it's part of the Korean way as well. But when you see one American reaching out to another in times of hardship, that is one of the things I think is very precious about our society. And the spirit of those volunteers out there, it's amazing. One of them actually hit me up for a little donation. [Laughter] I might say I understood perfectly, and in a modest way was able to contribute to this volunteer sector.

Let me just go into a couple of problems. This has been a command center. I understand that some in the community were unhappy by the location of the disaster relief center. And by early next week, that unhappiness should give way because we are going to have a new, acceptable location to serve the needs of the community. And I understand that not having forms in Korean is a problem, and now there's efforts going on to be sure that those forms are printed in a way that can be understood in Korean so they can be understood by those small family operators that have suffered because of these uncontrolled forces.

We also realize that translators are a problem, and we are working to provide

translators to help with disaster relief. And of course, once again I salute the community, because the community is doing some of that. I just noticed that in here in a volunteer sense. There is no way I can tell you how much I respect what Radio Korea has done. I happen to be sitting next to its boss. But I will simply say we applaud Radio Korea for the support that has constantly been given to the Korean community, the pride that this station reflects when it brings to others what the Korean-American community stands for. It is wonderful, and we're grateful to you, sir. And I think you've acted as a lifeline in a sense in this tragic situation. A couple of people told me that as I was walking in.

Two immediate concerns, and then I want to hear from you the priorities. I want to be sure that while I'm here I don't overlook a priority. Two immediate concerns are: What will the Government do to bring about a speedy economic recovery, and what can we do to ease the awful racial tension? I spoke about it in a church today, Reverend E.V. Hill's church. I think all Americans have to be concerned about both those points.

I want you to know that the situation in L.A. is on the minds of all Americans. It is not a local situation. What's happened here is not something that we saw for an ugly moment that'll be forgotten. We've got to continue to strive for racial harmony and for the elimination of discrimination wherever it occurs in this country. And I am thankful, of course, that the streets are safer, with kids back in school, and that businesses are reopening. But now we need to concentrate on a major rebuilding effort.

I have signed, as I'm sure you all know, a declaration, a disaster declaration, having directed FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and Mrs. Saiki and the Small Business Administration that she so ably heads to provide immediate assistance to the victimized parties. Pat can answer your questions, can give you much more of the detail there. But it is a very important Agency at this time.

FEMA is providing grants for personal needs such as food and clothing and medicine, for minor home damage, and unemployment assistance to those who are now

without jobs. Even though they have their own businesses, some are without work because those businesses were destroyed. We have an 800 assistance number that will also receive calls in six languages. The Korean community took it on the chin the most, I think, but others are hurting, too. So we, the Federal Government, and Governor Wilson, and the Mayor are trying to respond as best we can to all the hurt out there. The SBA is also making disaster loans available for business losses, for home damage. Those loans could total over \$300 million. All told, the Federal aid to Los Angeles and the surrounding areas here could run in the range of about \$600 million.

Again, I am delighted to have this opportunity to come here. And I just hope you will tell those who are hurt that, one, we care, and two, we are trying our level-best to heal those wounds, to get people back on their feet again. Because when I think of what this country needs, it's more small businesses, it's more entrepreneurs, people that will come here and take a risk and hopefully earn their share of what we think of as the American dream.

I know that this American dream is still real. I'm sure to a businessman, a wife and a husband, for example, whose business has been closed and brutalized and ruined, he might wonder: Well, what's it all about? What does this mean? We have got, you and I—maybe you all can do it best—is convince those people that are hurting that the American dream is for real. And you will rebuild, and we'll be a part of helping you.

So that's what I wanted to say. And David, I'd love to hear from members of the community and what you think we might do to assist. But we care very, very much. And as I say, I want to be the President to take the signal out around, back to Korea itself, and say: Look, people got hurt in my country, good people, good citizens. But we're going to make them whole, and we're going to give them some hope.

So now, I don't know what the schedule is—

Participant. Open for questions and comments.

The President. Fire away.

[A participant requested that aid for

Korean-American victims go beyond standard disaster relief guidelines. Another participant spoke on cooperation among ethnic groups in the rebuilding effort.]

The President. Thank you for your statement.

[A participant asked about the location of the FEMA office in Koreatown and the creation of enterprise zones.]

The President. Let me answer the first one by saying I'm not sure. I know we are pledged to move it. I'm looking around for somebody to tell me what has been decided. But I know there's been unhappiness with the first. I have this statement saying we will change it. But you're saying, in this very building?

Participant. Not actually. Next building. Next one across the street.

The President. Well, let me record that and tell our FEMA people who is——

Presidential Aide. Sir, we're going to be working with you to identify a suitable location. It is too premature to know exactly where it could be, but we want to work closely.

The President. But they're asking that it could be right across the street. Well, let's see what we can do to consider it, if that's the general feeling. I don't know if everybody feels that way.

Participant. That way we could communicate through radio. We have to mobilize people, mobilize volunteers, and we'd like to be close to the radio station. We would like to——

The President. We're trying to. Incidentally, on one-stop shopping—slightly different point—we've got a lot of Federal Agencies out here, and we want to have it as simple as possible. And that's why we have David Kearns and——out here, who are trying to coordinate the Federal effort. But thank you for the comment.

On the second one, I wish I could tell you the answer. We are going to urge the Congress to move right away on a legislation. And believe me, it will certainly include the Korean community. This is a concept that I've heard about all day long today. It's something we've been advocating for a long, long time. We're now talking

about the enterprise zones. That concept I think is an idea whose time has come. I'm seeing support publicly just in the last few days from people who have not supported it. I have said this is not a time for blame in terms of getting legislation going. But I can tell you, we feel much more optimistic, and we will be pushing hard to get it done. And the Korean-American community is obviously going to have a piece of the action.

[A participant suggested scholarship assistance for victims' family members, an SBA hotline, and waiver of documentation requirements for SBA loans.]

The President. Well, on waiving the requirements, I understand that some of the records are just going up in smoke, and therefore it's hard to have them.

Participant. That's right.

The President. Fortunately, we do have and would have access to the income tax returns. So, there will be a way to verify a lot of the claims. So, we hope we can get around this rigid requirement on that one.

The SBA, I don't know on the hotline. I'll let Pat speak. We will have, I think it is six offices to not only respond for SBA but put this in what we call a one-stop shopping approach where you have programs from HUD, you've got programs from HHS, you have programs from various different Agencies that can assist different parts of all of this.

On the third one, we believe that our approach to education is a good one, America 2000. And on scholarships, I don't know. Are you talking about a new scholarship program?

Participant. The individuals who have suffered the damage, the parents, the Korean-American parents may be unable to pay for the education of their children. So can you set aside some fundings for their children?

The President. Let me think about that one. I think we've got to be a little aware of the fact that there's a big demand for scholarship support all across the country. But whether it can be done on a set-aside basis, I just don't know how the law reads. But let me take a look.

[A participant requested assistance for

living expenses.]

The President. Thank you. Thank you, David. On the food assistance, there are substantial amounts of food coming in through our Department of Agriculture. I hope that's arranged so it's fitting for the requirements that it will be distributed here.

[*A participant spoke on Korean-American participation in government and in the rebuilding process.*]

The President. Good counsel. Thank you.

[*A participant spoke on the magnitude of the losses, unfavorable media coverage, and the speed of the Federal response.*]

The President. Let me comment on that, if I might. I don't know how anybody who has not been through what you've been through can say they understand. I don't know that. I believe that the Federal Government response is fast. I'm told by Mayor Bradley, I'm told by the Governor that it's fast. It may not seem fast to somebody that is hurting—

Participant. No, sir.

The President. —but it is fast. Pat Saiki was out here the very day it happened and has already started. So we will keep trying, and I just wanted you to know.

I don't know about the demonstration last night. I know there were some nice political shots fired at me which I didn't appreciate particularly, but I understand also that it comes from people wanting to get something done. And that you were mistreated there, I feel very, very badly about that because you shouldn't have been. You were expressing your rights as an American.

I don't know. You say the media mistreated you. I will certainly apologize for that. I have no control over it. And you know our system, to know that we have no control over it. But I guess what I'm trying to say is we do care, and we will try very, very hard to help.

And when you get to be President, you do identify with people's suffering. Today it's here. And yesterday it was another place somewhere in the country, unrelated to riots. Tomorrow it will be something else. That's just the way our country is. But I will try to be as responsive as I possibly

can. And I know it must feel a thousand miles away, Washington and all the forms to fill out. But these comments you have made I think sensitize all of us to the need to do our level-best and to move as fast as possible. So it's not in vain. We'll keep trying.

[*A participant spoke on efforts to resolve racial tension.*]

The President. That's a very important statement, Dr. Yang. Let me say this, that we had a very interesting meeting with some mayors here. One of them was the Mayor of Ingleside. The Mayor of Ingleside told us that he had led that community, church leaders, ethnic group leaders, whatever, long before the riots started. He'd had meetings with Korean business people or civic leaders or church leaders, meeting with black leaders, Afro-America leaders, and then the elected officials in the community.

You see, I am convinced that when you live close in—your second point is right on target—that it is going to have to be the local communities. The Federal Government can set a tone: no discrimination, rule out bigotry, hatred, and all of that. But to practice it, it's going to have to be done by getting across these lines and by leaders—and you and I are saying the same thing—with the churches in the lead, city governments being responsive, to get across these cultural boundaries.

And I salute you for what you've done. I was in E.V. Hill's church this morning. There were some Korean pastors there. And my emphasis was one on the essentiality of strengthening the American family. In your community, it is my perception that you have strong family values. I think you are blessed with the strength in family values. You've got to share with whoever is open-minded enough to listen. And religious leaders, I think, can do a lot. I'm not trying to avoid responsibility from the Federal Government, but I really think it's something that can't be legislated. This is something that really has to happen, come from the heart, and has to happen through what I think you're obviously trying to do in your church. And yes, it is longer range. But we can't give up on it.

And it is not just the Korean community or the black community; there are others who feel the same sense of anguish and hurt. We haven't talked about Hispanics here. But I think your point is very valid.

[A participant asked about law enforcement measures after the departure of National Guard units.]

The President. May I ask you one? I don't want to sound defensive, but why do you assume that I'm only concerned about Beverly Hills?

[The participant cited media coverage of Los Angeles.]

The President. No, that's why I asked the question, because that obviously is something local and I hadn't seen it. But the answer clearly is local law enforcement. There's no other answer. There's no Federal police force in this country, and there will not be as long as I am President. We don't need that. But we do need to guarantee the rights of citizens to be protected under the law by the local police. The State police have some role in this. Federal crime is violated, the Feds have some role in it.

What's happening now is we're just trying to guarantee everybody's civil rights under the civil rights statute. But in terms of the guy that gets beat up at a gas station, that clearly has to be a renewed effort by the local authorities to guarantee the safety of the life and limb of American citizens. The law has got to be totally colorblind in that regard, and people have to, local police have to do their level-best.

Participant. But they never did ask for us—

The President. They must do it. They must do it.

[A participant requested the names of Federal relief staff members and stressed the need for bilingual staff.]

The President. We're having a meeting tonight with people like David Kearns who is out here, who came here to set up the—you're talking about Federal response.

Participant. Right, the Federal response.

The President. And out of that, we will have the names of the people who are going to be staffing these regional centers. That's

the level at which the action will be taking place. So I hope we'll get this to the community and get that response to you as quickly as possible.

[A participant spoke on Korean-American participation at decision-making levels of government.]

The President. I appreciated what my Andover colleague said. We have at least tried to have a better record in terms of numbers of Asian-American appointees, and we'll keep working on that. Do not make the mistake of thinking that the Federal Government is going to wave a wand and solve these problems. You say you don't have any elected representative. I've heard some real talent here today. I've heard some very able and articulate voices. And I don't know how much participation these voices have tried to have in the local political process.

But you don't need a civics lecture from me when we're talking about how you help in a community that's been ravaged, but to really have the clout and to really effect the change on matters we're talking about here today, I think it calls for participation in the political process, not to give up on it, not to think Washington can dictate to the local. So maybe there's some good activity in that regard; but if there's not, I strongly would urge that kind of participation.

Participant. I'm primarily concerned about the appointing positions in both local and in Federal Government.

The President. That's not where the power is. The power with the people, with people that are elected, whether they're low—that's the only point I'm making.

Participant. We were simply saying we've been trying, and we'll work with you, and we need your support.

The President. Yes. That I agree with. No, there's no problem with that.

[A participant spoke on Korean-American participation in government.]

The President. No, I think that's a very good point, and I think that's where I think the action is. Whether it's elected or appointed, I think that kind of community decision-making level is what's required at this juncture. I'm not arguing against Fed-

eral appointments, but I'm saying that this is where—

Participant. Mr. President, I want you to know that the leadership by election is very unfeasible because only people who—persons of the Korean population, the whole general election area, how could you think that we expect someone to be elected by the Caucasian, white Caucasian. So appointing a position is the one that we can work with very closely as a part of our education, as a part of channel to work with the Federal Government and local government.

The President. I think that's important, but please do not give up on the local level, whether it's appointment to the—what Ueberroth is doing, whether it's representation on committees that will come out of how the Federal aid is coordinated or what the Governor does. That's all I'm saying, is I really think—and don't give up on the idea that if you only have got a certain percent, that means nobody else will vote for you.

I mean, I was listening. The concept of can we stay here, I have got to help on that. Everybody in the community has got to help to say: Look, this is a setback, this is a serious setback. And I think I maybe have more of a responsibility on this point to make clear to the American people that you're welcome and that this is an aberration. This isn't the American dream. So I'll try to assist in that as best I can. I did mention this in my speech to the—the heartbreak of the—and I got some messages back on that.

[A participant asked what role Korean-American community organizations could play in the rebuilding and relief efforts.]

The President. What you're doing. What I saw when I walked in here is profound. I mean, this isn't some passing fantasy when you see all those volunteers out there doing

something that in some ways people might just hang back and say, where are the Government people to do this? These people are reaching out into the community, trying to find what the problem is, what the location of the disaster is, and then trying to reach out to the agencies to take care of those specific cases.

I would certainly continue that kind of effort. What these gentlemen were talking about is participating in the committees that inevitably are formed from the distribution of Federal or State assistance. I think that is very important. And I think what you project, how you project the problems—here are people that have come here very recently, settled in with the work ethic, the family ethic, clearly not just because the pastors are here but a sense of faith, and convey to the community that that is not dead in spite of the setback.

Now, that's asking a lot until there are some remedial action taken, but I sense, when I've come here, a certain determination. And I think you've got to project that. If you project the defeatism, that we've been defeated, we've been beaten, then I think that is real bad. That's what you asked, what you can do for the community. Again, I've tried to outline here what the Federal Government and other government entities can do for the community. I think they go hand in hand.

[A participant asked about the terms of the SBA loans.]

The President. Let me turn to my able assistant, Pat Saiki, who can answer the specifics on that, because I can't.

Note: The President spoke at 2:05 p.m. at the Radio Korea broadcast studio. In his remarks, he referred to Peter Ueberroth, chairman of the Rebuild L.A. Committee.